VOLAPÜK: A COMPREHENSIVE TEXTBOOK

The World Language — Menade bal, püki bal

(One humanity, one language)

PART ONE: HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Chapter 1: The Origins of Volapük

1.1 Johann Martin Schleyer and the Birth of Volapük

Volapük — whose very name means "World Speech" (from *vol* "world" + *pük* "language/speech") — holds the distinction of being the first constructed international auxiliary language to achieve widespread success. It was created between 1879 and 1880 by Johann Martin Schleyer (1831–1912), a Roman Catholic priest in Baden, in what is now the German state of Baden-Württemberg.

The story of Volapük's genesis is a remarkable one. Schleyer was a polyglot priest who claimed familiarity with over fifty languages. One day, he encountered an old German peasant who was unable to write a letter to his son abroad because of the linguistic barrier separating them. Deeply moved by this encounter, Schleyer resolved that there ought to exist a means of universal international communication. He first devised a "National Alphabet" — a universal phonetic writing system intended to represent the sounds of all the world's languages. When this system failed to gain any recognition, Schleyer fell into a period of insomnia. During one sleepless night, he believed that God spoke to him, calling upon him not to despair and instead to create an international auxiliary language.

Schleyer first published a sketch of his new language in May 1879 in *Sionsharfe*, a Catholic poetry magazine of which he was editor. The very first sample sentence he composed was: *"Mit Gott lasst uns alle Dinge anfangen!"* ("With God let us begin all things!") — and it was followed shortly by Catholic verse translated into Volapük. In 1880, he published a full-length grammar of the language in German. Although Schleyer himself did not produce textbooks in other languages, other enthusiasts soon did: Alfred A. Post wrote *Comprehensive Volapük Grammar*, K. A. Linderfelt wrote

A Complete Grammar of Volapük, and Charles E. Sprague published his *Hand-book of Volapük*.

1.2 The Meteoric Rise (1880–1889)

Volapük met with immediate and extraordinary success. In 1882, a society to promote the language was founded in Vienna. By 1884, interest had spread to Belgium and the Netherlands, and from there it swept across Europe, the Americas, Russia, and parts of Asia.

Three international Volapük conventions were held, each marking a milestone. The First International Congress of Volapük (*Volapükakongred*) was held at Friedrichshafen in 1884, conducted entirely in German. The second took place in Munich in 1887, also primarily in German. At this second congress, the *Kadem Bevünetik Volapüka* (International Academy of Volapük) was established in Paris to preserve, improve, and propagate the language. The third congress took place in Paris in August 1889 — and this time, approximately two hundred delegates from many countries conducted the entire proceedings exclusively in Volapük. As the scholar André Cherpillod observed: "For the first time in the history of mankind, sixteen years before the Boulogne convention, an international convention spoke an international language."

At its zenith, the Volapük movement boasted an estimated 283 clubs in many countries, 25 periodicals published in or about the language, and 316 textbooks in 25 languages. The language claimed nearly a million adherents.

1.3 Decline and the Rise of Esperanto (1889–1900s)

The decline of Volapük was as rapid as its rise, driven by a combination of internal strife and external competition. The Dutch cryptographer Auguste Kerckhoffs, who served as director of the Academy for several years, along with other Academy members, desired reforms to the language — particularly to its complex grammar and heavily distorted vocabulary. Schleyer, however, insisted fiercely on retaining proprietary control over every aspect of his creation. He regarded himself as the supreme authority on all matters concerning Volapük and refused to countenance changes proposed without his approval.

This conflict between reformers and Schleyer led to schism. In 1890, Schleyer resigned from the Academy and established a rival one, staffed entirely by

loyalists. By this time, the movement was in disarray, with violent arguments among factions. Many members of the Academy eventually abandoned Schleyer's Volapük altogether; some created derivative languages (Idiom Neutral, Nal Bino, Balta, Bopal, Spelin, and others), all of which were quickly forgotten.

Meanwhile, in 1887, Dr. L. L. Zamenhof had published the first book on Esperanto (*Unua Libro*). Esperanto was perceived as simpler to learn, more euphonious, and — crucially — it was not under the autocratic control of any single individual. Many former Volapük clubs converted themselves into Esperanto clubs. By the turn of the century, Esperanto had supplanted Volapük as the dominant international auxiliary language.

1.4 Revival under Arie de Jong and Modern Volapük

In the 1920s, the Dutch scholar Arie de Jong (1865–1957) undertook a thorough revision of Volapük, with the consent of the small surviving speaker community. Published in 1931, this reformed version became known as *Volapük Nulik* ("New Volapük"), as distinct from *Volapük Rigik* ("Original Volapük"). De Jong's reforms included simplifying the grammar (removing rarely used forms such as the aorist and the jussive mood), eliminating gendered pronouns and certain gendered verb endings, and rehabilitating the phoneme /r/ — which Schleyer had avoided on the theory that it was difficult for Chinese speakers — to make many words more recognizable. For instance, *lömib* ("rain") became *rein*, and *liládön* ("to read") became *reidön*.

Volapük enjoyed a brief renewal under de Jong's leadership, particularly in the Netherlands and Germany, but was suppressed along with other constructed languages under Nazi rule and never fully recovered.

There has, however, been an unbroken succession of *Cifals* (leaders) of the Volapük movement from Schleyer's time to the present day: Schleyer (1879–1912), Albert Sleumer (1912–1948), Arie de Jong (provisionally, 1947–1948; 1951–1957), Jakob Sprenger (1948–1950), Johann Schmidt (1950–1977), Johann Krüger (1977–1983), Brian Bishop (1984–2014), and Hermann Philipps (2014–present). As of the early 2000s, there were an estimated 20 active speakers of Volapük. In the 21st century, a small revival — primarily as a hobby language — has been

aided by the internet, including the Volapük Wikipedia (*Vükiped*), which by 2007 had risen to over 112,000 articles.

1.5 Volapük and Religious Translation

Schleyer's deep Catholicism profoundly shaped his work on Volapük. The very first texts composed in the language were Catholic poetry and prayers. Schleyer published translations of the Lord's Prayer (1880), excerpts from the Old Testament (1887), the First Epistle of John (1888), excerpts from the New Testament (1889), and — uniquely — selected passages from the Qur'an (1890). His approach to scripture translation was distinctive: rather than translating complete books, he created collections of "the one hundred most important and meaningful sentences" from each scripture, organized by theme and arranged alphabetically. His Qur'an translation (*Sets veütikün ä blefikün mosleminbiba*, "The Most Important and Concise Sentences from the Muslim Bible") was based entirely on Ludwig Ullmann's German Qur'an translation of 1840, as Schleyer did not know Arabic. A Jewish printer named Samuel Huebsch also produced a Volapük translation of the Proverbs of Solomon in New York in 1889, and Joel Elk translated an excerpt from the Talmud in Guadalajara, Mexico.

PART TWO: PHONOLOGY AND WRITING SYSTEM

Chapter 2: The Volapük Alphabet (*Lafab Volapüka*)

2.1 Letters and Their Sounds

Volapük uses a modified Latin alphabet consisting of **27 letters**: 8 vowels and 19 consonants. The letters **Q** and **W** are not used (though W was introduced in the reformed language for certain words). The three special letters **Ä**, **Ö**, and **Ü** are essential.

The Vowels:

Letter	IPA	Approximate Sound
a	[a] ~ [ɑ]	as *a* in "father"
ä	[ɛ] ~ [æ]	as *ea* in "head" or *a* in "cat"
e	[e]	as *e* in "obey" or "bed"
i	[i]	as *ee* in "bee"
o	[o] ~ [ɔ]	as *o* in "more" or "note"

Letter	IPA	Approximate Sound
ö	[ø]	as *eu* in French *jeu* or *u* in "fur"
u	[u]	as *oo* in "fool"
ü	[y]	as *u* in French *rue* or *ü* in German *Büro*

The Consonants:

Letter	IPA	Approximate Sound
b	[b]	as in "ball"
c	[t͡ʃ] ~ [d͡ʒ]	as *ch* in "church"; voiced [dʒ] after voiced consonants
d	[d]	as in "dog"
f	[f]	as in "file"
g	[g]	always hard, as *g* in "get"
h	[h]	as in "hill"
j	[ʃ] ~ [ʒ]	as *sh* in "shoe"; voiced [ʒ] after voiced consonants
k	[k]	as in "kettle"
l	[l]	as in "lake"
m	[m]	as in "man"
n	[n]	as in "name"
p	[p]	as in "pill"
r	[r]	trilled or tapped, as in "rain" (not in original Volapük; added in reformed version)
s	[s] ~ [z]	as *s* in "single"; voiced [z] after voiced consonants
t	[t]	as in "tale"
v	[v]	as in "vale"
x	[ks]	as *x* in "fix"
y	[j]	as *y* in "yell"
z	[t͡s] ~ [d͡z]	as *ts* in "bats"; voiced [dz] after voiced consonants

2.2 Special Historical Letters

Schleyer also designed special letters for representing sounds from foreign languages in his "universal alphabet." These include *å* [ɔː], *ħ* [ð], *ŋ* [ŋ], and others. These are not used in ordinary Volapük text.

For the letters ä, ö, and ü, Schleyer also proposed unique alternative letterforms that are now encoded in Unicode (since version 7.0, 2014): **ᴂ** (Volapük ae), **ɶ** (Volapük oe), and **ᴙ** (Volapük ue). These are purely historical curiosities today.

2.3 Phonological Rules

No diphthongs. Every vowel letter is pronounced as a separate syllable. Two adjacent vowels are never merged into a diphthong. Thus: *laut* = [la.ut] (two syllables), *geil* = [ge.il], *sied* = [si.ed], *rein* = [re.in] ("ray-een"), *tood* = [to.od].

Stress. Polysyllabic words are always stressed on the **final vowel**. For example: *neai* "never" = [ne.a.ˈi]. The interrogative clitic *-li* and the subjunctive particle *-la* are hyphenated and do not shift stress: *binol-li?* is stressed on *-nol*, not on *-li*.

Voicing assimilation. The consonants **c, j, s,** and **z** are voiced after voiced consonants and voiceless otherwise. Thus *bs* = [bz], *ds* = [dz], *gs* = [gz].

2.4 Capitalization

Capitalization rules in Volapük follow the general conventions of European languages: the first word of a sentence is capitalized, as are proper nouns.

PART THREE: GRAMMAR (*Gramat*)

Chapter 3: Nouns (*Subsats*)

3.1 No Grammatical Gender; No Article

Volapük nouns have **no grammatical gender**. There is **no indefinite or definite article**. Thus *dom* can mean "house," "a house," or "the house" depending on context.

However, the particle **el** is used as a quasi-article for foreign proper nouns or words that have not been assimilated into Volapük:

- *El 'Sputnik' binon in stel.* — "The 'Sputnik' is in the stars."
- *El Paris binon cifazif Fransäna.* — "Paris is the capital of France."

The prefix **hi-** marks masculine and **ji-** marks feminine when sex must be specified: *hijevod* "stallion" (from *jevod* "horse"), *jijip* "ewe" (from *jip* "sheep").

3.2 Case Declension

Volapük nouns inflect for **four cases**: nominative, genitive, dative, and accusative. There is also a vocative form using the particle **o**.

Case	Singular Ending	Plural Ending	Example (*vol* "world")
Nominative	—	-s	vol / vols
Genitive	-a	-as	vola / volas
Dative	-e	-es	vole / voles
Accusative	-i	-is	voli / volis
Vocative	o + noun	o + noun-s	O vol! / O vols!

Examples:

- *Pened binon in tood.* — "The letter is in the car." (nominative)
- *Tood fata obik.* — "My father's car." (genitive: *fata* = "of father")
- *Givob buki tidane.* — "I give the book to the teacher." (dative: *tidane* = "to the teacher")
- *Visitobs domi.* — "We visit the house." (accusative: *domi*)

The genitive can also be expressed with the preposition **de**: *flen de hipul* = *flen hipula* ("the boy's friend").

3.3 Plural

The plural is formed simply by adding **-s** after any case ending:

- *dom* → *doms* (houses, nominative plural)
- *domi* → *domis* (houses, accusative plural)
- *doma* → *domas* (of houses, genitive plural)

Chapter 4: Pronouns (*Pönops*)

4.1 Personal Pronouns

Volapük pronouns begin with **o-** and are declined exactly like nouns:

Person	Singular	Plural
1st	**ob** — I	**obs** — we
2nd (familiar)	**ol** — thou/you	**ols** — you (pl.)
2nd (polite)	**or** — you	**ors** — you (pl.)
3rd masculine	**om** — he	**oms** — they (m.)
3rd feminine	**of** — she	**ofs** — they (f.)
3rd neuter/common	**on** — it/he/she	**ons** — they
Impersonal	**os** — it (weather, time)	—
Generic	**oy** — one	—

Declension examples for *ob* "I": genitive *oba* "of me/my," dative *obe* "to me," accusative *obi* "me."

4.2 Possessive Adjectives

Possessives are formed by adding **-ik** to the pronoun: *obik* "my," *olik* "your," *omik* "his," *ofik* "her," *onik* "its," *obsik* "our," *olsik* "your (pl.)," *omsik* "their (m.)," etc.

Alternatively, the genitive form suffices: *oba* = "my/of me."

4.3 Other Pronouns

- **ok** — reflexive ("oneself"): *Flapom oki.* "He hits himself."
- **od** — reciprocal ("each other"): *Löfons odis.* "They love each other."
- **at** — this; **et** — that
- **kel** — who/which (relative)
- **kin** / **kim** / **kif** — who? (general/masculine/feminine)
- **kis** / **kin** — what?
- **ek** — somebody; **nek** — nobody
- **bos** — something; **nos** — nothing

Chapter 5: Adjectives and Adverbs

5.1 Adjectives (*Ladyeks*)

Adjectives are formed by adding the suffix **-ik** to a root:

- *gud* → *gudik* "good"
- *bad* → *badik* "bad"
- *gret* → *gretik* "great/large"
- *smal* → *smalik* "small"
- *bäld* → *bäldik* "old"
- *nul* → *nulik* "new"
- *hit* → *hitik* "hot"
- *kold* → *koldik* "cold"

When an adjective **follows** its noun, it does not agree in case or number:

- *Buk smalik nitedik.* — "A small, interesting book."

When an adjective **precedes** its noun, is separated from it, or stands alone, it **must agree** in case and number:

- *Labob smalikis nitedikis bukis.* — "I have small interesting books."

5.2 Comparison

The **comparative** is formed with **-um** and the **superlative** with **-ün**:

- *nulik* → *nulikum* "newer" → *nulikün* "newest"
- *gudik* → *gudikum* "better" → *gudikün* "best"

The comparative uses the preposition **ka** ("than") and the superlative uses **se** ("out of/of"):

- *Flens gudikum ka ons.* — "Better friends than they."
- *Flens gudikün se valikans.* — "Best friends of all."

5.3 Adverbs

Adverbs are formed by adding **-o** to the root or to the adjectival *-ik*:

- *gudik* → *gudiko* "well"
- *badik* → *badiko* "badly"
- *del* (day) → *delo* "by day"
- *verätik* → *verätiko* "correctly"

Common root adverbs (not ending in *-o*): *ai* "always," *ba* "perhaps," *i* "also," *is* "here," *nu* "now," *plu* "more," *te* "only," *ti* "almost," *us* "there," *ya* "indeed," *ye* "however."

Chapter 6: The Numeral System

6.1 Cardinal Numbers

Volapük's numerals are largely *a priori* — not derived from any natural language:

Number	Volapük	Number	Volapük
0	**ser**	10	**deg**
1	**bal**	11	**degbal**
2	**tel**	12	**degtel**
3	**kil**	20	**teldeg**
4	**fol**	21	**teldegbal**
5	**lul**	30	**kildeg**
6	**mäl**	100	**tum**
7	**vel**	1,000	**mil**
8	**jöl**	1,000,000	**balion**
9	**zül**		

Large numbers are composed by concatenation: 234 = *teltumkildegfol*; 567 = *lultummäldegvel*.

Numerals are placed **after** their nouns: *mans tel* "two men," *voms kil* "three women."

6.2 Ordinal Numbers

Ordinals are formed with the suffix **-id**: *balid* "first," *telid* "second," *kilid* "third," *folid* "fourth," etc.

6.3 Fractional and Multiplicative Numbers

Fractions use the suffix **-dil**: *teldil* "half" (1/2), *foldil* "quarter" (1/4).

Multiplication uses **-na**: *folna fol binos degmäl* "4 × 4 = 16."

Chapter 7: Verbs (*Värbs*)

The Volapük verb is the most complex part of the grammar, with morphemes marking tense, aspect, voice, person, number, and mood. The reformed language has approximately 1,683 possible conjugation forms for each verb — all formed regularly with no exceptions.

7.1 The Infinitive

The infinitive ends in **-ön**:

- *binön* — to be
- *labön* — to have
- *penön* — to write
- *golön* — to go
- *löfön* — to love
- *logön* — to see
- *fidön* — to eat

7.2 Forming the Present Tense

Remove *-ön* from the infinitive and add the appropriate pronoun suffix:

Person	Suffix	Example (*binön*)
I	-ob	**binob** (I am)
you (fam.)	-ol	**binol** (you are)
he	-om	**binom** (he is)
she	-of	**binof** (she is)
it/they (neut.)	-on	**binon** (it is)

Person	Suffix	Example (*binön*)
one	-oy	**binoy** (one is)
we	-obs	**binobs** (we are)
you (pl.)	-ols	**binols** (you are)
they (m.)	-oms	**binoms** (they are)
they (f.)	-ofs	**binofs** (they are)
they (neut.)	-ons	**binons** (they are)

When a noun is the subject, the verb takes the pronoun appropriate to that noun:

- *Man golom.* — "The man goes." (*-om* because man is masculine)
- *Vom golof.* — "The woman goes." (*-of* because woman is feminine)
- *Cil fidon.* — "The child eats." (*-on* because child is neuter)

7.3 Tense System

Tenses are indicated by vowel prefixes attached before the verb stem:

Tense	Prefix	Example (*binob* "I am")
Present	— (no prefix; or *a-*)	binob
Past (Imperfect)	**ä-**	äbinob ("I was")
Perfect	**e-**	ebinob ("I have been")
Pluperfect	**i-**	ibinob ("I had been")
Future	**o-**	obinob ("I will be")
Future Perfect	**u-**	ubinob ("I will have been")
Future in Past	**ö-**	öbinob ("I was going to be")
Future Perfect in Past	**ü-**	übinob ("I would have been going to be")

The present prefix *a-* is normally omitted in the active voice but appears when needed for clarity or in the passive voice.

Tense applied to non-verbs (temporal words):

From *del* "day":

- *adelo* — today
- *ädelo* — yesterday
- *odelo* — tomorrow
- *edelo* — the day before yesterday
- *idelo* — three days ago
- *udelo* — the day after tomorrow

7.4 Passive Voice

The passive is formed by adding the prefix **p-** before the tense prefix (using *a-* for present):

- *palöfob* — "I am loved" (present passive)
- *pälöfob* — "I was loved" (past passive)
- *pelöfob* — "I have been loved" (perfect passive)
- *pilöfob* — "I had been loved" (pluperfect passive)
- *polöfob* — "I will be loved" (future passive)

The agent in a passive construction is introduced with **fa** ("by"):

- *Palöfob fa mot obik.* — "I am loved by my mother."

7.5 Moods

Interrogative: Questions are formed with the unstressed particle **-li** after the verb:

- *Kömof-li ko flen?* — "Is she coming with a friend?"
- *Kiöpo binon-li pened?* — "Where is the letter?"

Negative: The particle **no** precedes the verb:

- *No löfob fleni olik.* — "I don't like your friend."

Optative (Polite request): suffix **-ös**:

- *Kömolös ko flen!* — "(Please) come with a friend!"
- *Golobsös!* — "Let's go!"

Imperative (Command): suffix **-öd**:

- *Gololöd!* — "Go!" (to one person)
- *Gololsöd!* — "Go!" (to several people)

Conditional: suffix **-öv** for the apodosis; particle **-la** for the protasis:

- *If äbinob-la liegik, äbinoböv givik.* — "If I were rich, I would be generous."

Potential: suffix **-öx**:

- *Pelomöx.* — "He might pay."

7.6 Participles

Participles are formed with **-öl** and function as adjectives:

- *logöl* — seeing
- *elogöl* — having seen
- *palogöl* — being seen
- *pelogöl* — having been seen
- *ologöl* — about to see

7.7 Reflexive Verbs

Reflexive forms use the pronoun **ok** (declined like a noun):

- *Vatükom oki.* — "He washes himself."
- *Vatükom omi.* — "He washes him (someone else)."

The reciprocal pronoun **od** distinguishes mutual action:

- *Löfobs okis.* — "We love ourselves."
- *Löfobs odis.* — "We love each other."

7.8 Transitivity

Intransitive verbs are made transitive with the affix **-ük-**, and transitive verbs are made intransitive with **-ik-**:

- *Seadom su stul.* — "He is sitting on the chair." (intransitive)
- *Seadükom cili sui stul.* — "He seats the child on the chair." (transitive)

Chapter 8: Word Formation

8.1 Compounding

Compound words are formed by placing the modifying root first, joined to the main root by the genitive ending **-a** (or sometimes **-i** for the accusative relationship):

- *Bödakanit* — "birdsong" (*böd* "bird" + *kanit* "song")
- *Kanitaböd* — "songbird"
- *Pokamon* — "pocket-money"

- *Monapok* — "money-pocket"

8.2 Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
be-	makes indirect object → direct object	*begivön* "to present with"
fi-	to completion	*fireidön* "to read completely"
hi-	male	*hijevod* "stallion"
ji-	female	*jijip* "ewe"
ke-	together	*kemen* "fellow human"
le-	augmentative/greatness	*lekan* "art" (great ability)
lu-	disparagement/step-relation	*ludom* "hovel"; *lufat* "stepfather"
lü-	in-law	*lüblod* "brother-in-law"
ne-	opposite	*nelaodik* "quiet" (opposite of loud)
ru-	ancient/primeval	*rufot* "primeval forest"

8.3 Suffixes

Suffix	Meaning	Example
-am	verbal noun (action)	*finükam* "completion"
-an	person associated with	*feilan* "peasant"
-av	science of	*stelav* "astronomy"
-äb	victim/sufferer	*fanäb* "prisoner"
-äd	generalized effect	*spikäd* "lecture"
-än	country	*Deutän* "Germany"; *Fransän* "France"
-ät	abstract quality	*menät* "humanity"
-ed	particular instance	*pened* "letter" (a writing)
-ef	group of people	*reidanef* "readership"
-el	doer/maker	*bodel* "baker"
-em	collection	*bukem* "library"
-et	concrete result	*jonet* "TV screen"
-il	diminutive	*domil* "cottage"; *katül* "kitten"
-öf	quality of	*flenöfik* "friendly"
-öm	instrument/equipment	*nünöm* "computer"
-öp	place of	*voböp* "workplace"
-ül	young of / endearment	*katül* "kitten"

8.4 Forming Other Parts of Speech

Prepositions can be formed from noun roots using **-ü**: *nil* "proximity" → *nilü* "near."

Conjunctions use **-ä**: *kod* "cause" → *kodä* "why" (relative).

Interjections use **-ö**: *seil* "silence" → *seilö!* "Silence!"

Chapter 9: Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Interjections

9.1 Common Prepositions

bü — before (time); *dis* — under; *fo* — before (place); *in* — in; *ko* — with (together); *ma* — according to; *nen* — without; *po* — behind; *su* — on; *sus* — above; *ta* — against; *vü* — between; *de* — of/from; *ad* — to (purpose); *fa* — by (agent); *me* — by means of; *pro* — for; *tü* — at (time); *lü* — to/toward.

Prepositions of motion are formed by adding **-i** (to) or **-a** (from): *sui* "onto," *sua* "off of."

9.2 Common Conjunctions

ab — but; *bi* — because; *das* — that; *dat* — so that; *do* — though; *du* — while; *e* (ed before a vowel) — and; *klu* — therefore; *u* (ud before a vowel) — or; *if* — if; *äsä* — just as.

9.3 Common Interjections

ag! — ah!; *he!* — hey!; *o!* — oh!; *sö!* — psst!; *begö!* — please!; *danö!* — thank you!; *pidö!* — sorry!; *pardö!* — excuse me!; *yufö!* — help!; *stopö!* — stop!; *seilö!* — silence!

PART FOUR: LEXICON

Chapter 10: Essential Vocabulary

10.1 Everyday Nouns

Volapük	English	Volapük	English
dom	house	buk	book
tood	car	stul	chair
bür	office	pened	letter
man	man	vom	woman
cil	child	hipul	boy
jipul	girl	flen	friend
fat	father	mot	mother
blod	brother	sör	sister
son	son	daut	daughter
nem	name	del	day
neit	night	yel	year

Volapük	English	Volapük	English
vig	week	mul	month
düp	hour	minut	minute
sol	sun	mun	moon
stel	star	süt	street
zif	town	län	country
mel	sea	fot	forest
rein	rain	nif	snow
flor	flower	bim	tree
dog	dog	kat	cat
böd	bird	fid	food
bod	bread	vat	water
kaf	coffee	tied	tea
vin	wine	bir	beer
juk	shoe	klot	cloth/clothing
kop	body	ked	head
nam	hand	fut	foot
lil	ear	log	eye
nud	nose	mud	mouth
tok	tongue	hat	heart
god	god	cöd	justice
lif	life	ded	death

10.2 Common Verbs (Infinitive)

Volapük	English	Volapük	English
binön	to be	labön	to have
golön	to go	kömön	to come
vilön	to want	kanön	to be able
fidön	to eat	drinön	to drink
penön	to write	reidön	to read
logön	to see	lilön	to hear
spikön	to speak	sagön	to say
dunön	to do/make	vobön	to work
givön	to give	remön	to buy
nolön	to know	tikön	to think
löfön	to love	dredön	to fear
finükön	to finish	primön	to begin
slipön	to sleep	lifön	to live
deadön	to die	seadön	to sit
stödön	to stand	lödön	to dwell
lavön	to wash	klotön	to clothe

Volapük	English	Volapük	English
sedön	to send	visitön	to visit
plidön	to like	kolkömön	to meet
lükömön	to arrive	segolön	to go out
jelodön	to defend	sevädükön	to introduce

10.3 Useful Phrases

Volapük	English
Glidö!	Hello!
Benokömö!	Welcome!
Lio stadol-li?	How are you?
Gudiko, danö! Ed ol-li?	Well, thank you! And you?
Lio panemol-li?	What is your name?
Nem oba binon...	My name is...
Spikol-li Volapüki?	Do you speak Volapük?
Si! Ye nemödo.	Yes! But only a little.
Lärnob Volapüki.	I am learning Volapük.
No suemob atosi.	I don't understand that.
Suemob atosi.	I understand that.
Begö!	Please!
Danö!	Thank you!
Pidö!	Sorry!
Adyö!	Goodbye!
Gödi gudik!	Good morning!
Neiti gudik!	Good night!
Lelöfob oli.	I love you.
Kiöpo binon-li prifet?	Where is the toilet?
Spikolös nevivikumo, begö!	Please speak more slowly!
Yufö!	Help!

10.4 Countries and Languages

Country names are typically formed with the suffix **-än** and language names with **-pük**:

Country	Volapük	Language	Volapük
Germany	Deutän	German	Deutänapük
France	Fransän	French	Fransänapük
England	Linglän	English	Linglänapük
Italy	Litaliyän	Italian	Litaliyänapük
Spain	Spanyän	Spanish	Spanyänapük
Russia	Rusän	Russian	Rusänapük

Country	Volapük	Language	Volapük
China	Cinän	Chinese	Cinānapük
Japan	Yapänän	Japanese	Yapänänapük

10.5 Seasons, Time, and Nature

The seasons are derived poetically from natural phenomena:

- *Florüp* — Spring ("flower-time," from *flor* + *-üp* "period")
- *Hitüp* — Summer ("heat-time")
- *Fluküp* — Autumn ("fruit-time," from *fluk* "fruit")
- *Nifüp* — Winter ("snow-time")

Days of the week use ordinal numbers + *del*: *Balüdel* "Monday" (first day), *Telüdel* "Tuesday," etc.

Months use ordinal numbers + *mul*: *Yanul* "January," *Febul* "February," etc.

PART FIVE: READING PRACTICE — SACRED TEXTS IN VOLAPÜK

Chapter 11: Translations from the Bible, Quran, Vedas, and Avesta

Important Prefatory Note

Johann Martin Schleyer himself translated portions of the Bible and Qur'an into Volapük in the 1880s and 1890s. His Bible translations include the Lord's Prayer, excerpts from the Old and New Testaments, and the First Epistle of John. His Qur'an translation consisted of thematic selections from Ludwig Ullmann's German rendering.

No historical Volapük translations of the Hindu Vedas or the Zoroastrian Avesta are known to exist. The Vedic and Avestan passages presented below are **new translations** composed using the grammatical and lexical resources of modern Volapük (*Volapük Nulik*), rendered faithfully according to the language's established principles of word formation, grammar, and vocabulary. These are provided for educational purposes to demonstrate the expressive capacity of Volapük when applied to scriptures from diverse traditions. The Biblical and Qur'anic passages below include both historically attested translations by Schleyer and new renderings in modern Volapük.

11.1 From the Bible

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13)

This is the most famous Volapük text, published by Schleyer in 1880. The modern (de Jong) version is given here.

Volapük (Volapük Nulik):

> O Fat obas, kel binol in süls! Nem olik pasalüdükonöd! Regän ola kömonöd! Vil olik jenonöd, äsä in sül, i su tal! Givolös obes adelo bodi aldelik obsik! E pardolös obes döbotis obsik, äsä i obs pardobs utanes, kels edöbons kol obs. E no blufodolös obis, ab livükolös obis de bad! (Ibä dutons lü ol regän, e nämäd e glor jü ün laidüp.) So binosös!

English:

> Our Father, who art in heaven! Hallowed be thy name! Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done, as in heaven, so also upon the earth! Give us today our daily bread! And forgive us our trespasses, as we also forgive those who have trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil! (For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever.) So be it!

Genesis 1:1–3 (In the Beginning)

Volapük:

> In prim, God ejafom süli e tali. E tal äbinon vagik e voidik; e dökum äbinon su fased voda; e tikäl Goda ämuvon su vods. E God äsagom: Binosöd lait! E lait äbinon.

English:

> In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the waters; and the Spirit of God moved upon the waters. And God said: Let there be light! And there was light.

John 1:1–5 (The Prologue to the Gospel of John)

Volapük:

In prim äbinon Vöd, e Vöd äbinon ko God, e Vöd äbinon God. On äbinon in prim ko God. Dinas valik pejafomons me on; e nen on nosi pejafomon, keli pejafomons. In on äbinon lif; e lif äbinon lait menas. E lait geilon in dökum, e dökum no ekipom oni.

English:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Psalm 23:1–4 (The Lord Is My Shepherd)

Volapük:

Yel binon jäfüdel obik; nosi onelabob. Su yedaöps glinölik om mekon obi liedön; nilü vods silädik om dugon obi. Om nulükon tikäli oba; om dugon obi su vegs cödika, sekü nem onik. Si, do golob dü dalil deada, no odredob badi nonik; bi ol binol ko ob. Staf olik e baküd olik, ons tostobs obi.

English:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul; he leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

11.2 From the Qur'an

Schleyer published his *Sets veütikün ä blefikün mosleminbiba* ("The Most Important and Concise Sentences from the Muslim Bible") in 1890. He selected thematic excerpts and translated from Ullmann's German rendering. Below are attested Schleyer translations alongside new modern Volapük renderings.

Surah Al-Fatiha (The Opening, Qur'an 1:1–7)

Volapük (new rendering):

In nem Goda, Blegodöfikan, Misaladikan. Daludod Gode, Yele volsas valik. El Blegodöfikan, el Misaladikan. Suverenan Dela Gevalama. Te oli obs lüverons, e te oli obs begos yufami. Dugolös obis su veg cödikik — veg utanas, kelis ebenons; no utanas, kels pezünons; e no utanas, kels ecedons.

English:

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of all the worlds. The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Sovereign of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help. Guide us on the straight path — The path of those whom You have blessed; not of those who have earned wrath; and not of those who have gone astray.

Qur'an 82:13–14 (Schleyer's historical translation)

Volapük (Schleyer, 1890):

Cödikans okömoms in paladi vonik; abu klimidunels in höli.

English:

The righteous will come into a delightful paradise; the criminals, on the other hand, into hell.

Qur'an 25:71 (Schleyer's historical translation)

Volapük (Schleyer, 1890):

Aikel pönitom, e dunom vobädis gudik: ota levotäl al Godi binom pöcedöl, as känüdik.

English:

Whoever repents, and does good works: the same one's conversion to God is to be judged as sincere.

Qur'an 4:171 (Partial — Schleyer's historical translation)

Volapük (Schleyer, 1890):

Velatö! Mesial Yesus, son jiela Maria, aibinom legat'al Goda, ed Oma Vöd, keli elovepolom in jieli Maria, e Tikäl Oma.

English:

> Truly! The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, is a messenger of God, and His Word, which He has transferred unto Mary, and His Spirit.

Surah Al-Ikhlas (The Purity, Qur'an 112:1–4) — New Rendering

Volapük:

> Sagolöd: On binon God, el Balik. God, el Nelendik. No ejafom oni, e no pejafonom on. E nek binon leigik one.

English:

> Say: He is God, the One. God, the Eternal. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is none comparable to Him.

11.3 From the Vedas

No historical Volapük translations of the Vedas exist. The following are new renderings based on established Volapük grammar and vocabulary, offered as demonstration of the language's capacity.

Rig Veda 10.129 (Nasadiya Sukta — The Hymn of Creation, selected verses)

Volapük:

> No binon nebin, e no binon bin ün atos. No binon lut, e no binon sül pö ot. Kis äkuvom? Kiöpo? In küpam kima? No äbinon ded, e klu no äbinon nedet.
>
> Dökum äbinon me dökum pakuvöl in prim; valik at äbinon nefekömik. El Balik, kel äbinon kuvöl me vagät, ön ejafon se nämäd tikäla onik okik.
>
> Kin nolom veratiko? Kin sagom-li is atosi? Kiaf ejafons? Kiaf pejafomons? Gods ekömoms pos jafam vola at. Klu, kin nolom kiaf valik eprimomons?

English:

> There was not non-being, and there was not being at that time. There was no air, and no sky beyond it. What stirred? Where? In whose protection? There was no death, and therefore there was no immortality.

Darkness was concealed by darkness in the beginning; all this was indistinguishable. The One, who was covered by the void, was born through the power of its own thought.

Who truly knows? Who will say it here? Whence were they produced? Whence is this creation? The gods came after the creation of this world. Then, who knows whence it has arisen?

Rig Veda 1.1.1 (First Verse — Invocation to Agni)

Volapük:

Daludob Agnii, säkredoteli poyädöl, godi äbadama, lefön givöli.

English:

I praise Agni, the chosen priest, the god of sacrifice, the lavish giver.

Isa Upanishad 1 (Opening Verse)

Volapük:

Me Yel at padafükon valik kel binon in vol at. Profitolös me nenemön! No desidolös labotis nekima!

English:

By the Lord is enveloped all that exists in this world. Enjoy through renouncing! Do not desire the possessions of another!

11.4 From the Avesta

No historical Volapük translations of the Zoroastrian Avesta are known. The following are new renderings.

Ahuna Vairya (The Most Sacred Zoroastrian Prayer)

Volapük:

Äs Yel pevilöl, äso Ratur pevilöl, sekü cödot onik, sekü dunams tikäla Mazdana. Nämäd Yela pagesevon utane, kel geivon givi oka Mazdae pro lutikans.

English:

Just as the Lord is to be chosen, so too is the Master to be chosen, for his righteousness, for the acts of the spirit of Mazda. The power of the Lord is given to one, who gives his gifts to Mazda for the poor.

Yasna 28:1 (First verse of the Gathas — Ahunavaiti Gatha)

Volapük:

Me nams dunikölöl, begos oli, o Mazda Ahura, e oli, o Vohü Mano, ad givön valosi obsik e olsik. Yufamis Ajana begobs binön in lait, e tidön dönulogami Sol Cöda.

English:

With hands outstretched in prayer, I beseech you, O Mazda Ahura, and you, O Vohu Manah, to grant all to us and to you. Through the assistance of Asha we pray to be in the light, and to behold the vision of the Righteous Sun.

Yasna 30:3–4 (The Two Spirits — from the Gathas)

Volapük:

In prim, tikäls at tel pejonoms äsä gemanis — el gudikan e el badikan — in tik, in vöd, e in dun. E vü ons tel, nofikans evilons gudiko, ab no stupikel.

E ven tikäls tel at ekolkömons, ons ejafoms bini e nebini, e lifami badikün pro sekans bada, ab lifami gudikün pro sekans cöda.

English:

In the beginning, these two spirits revealed themselves as twins — the better and the worse — in thought, in word, and in deed. And between these two, the wise choose rightly, but not the foolish.

And when these two spirits first came together, they created being and non-being, and the worst existence for the followers of evil, but the best existence for the followers of righteousness.

PART SIX: SAMPLE TEXTS AND EXERCISES

Chapter 12: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1

Volapük:

> Mens valik pemotons libiko e leigiko tefü digäd e gitäts. Labons tikäli e konsieni, e sötons kosädön ko ods siämü svistäl.

English:

> All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Chapter 13: Practice Exercises

Exercise 1: Translate into English

1. *Pened binon in tood.*
2. *Man binom ko vom.*
3. *Penob penedi.*
4. *Visitobs domi.*
5. *Obs vilobs toodi.*
6. *Binom flen.*
7. *Odelo fat obik openom penedi mote onsik.*
8. *Söl 'Smith' labom soni bal e dautis tel.*
9. *No plidob gespikis ad säks.*
10. *Man at binom vemo gretik.*

Answer Key — Exercise 1

1. The letter is in the car.
2. A man is with the woman.
3. I write (am writing) a letter.
4. We visit (are visiting) the house.
5. We want (do want) a car.
6. He is a friend.
7. Tomorrow my father will write a letter to their mother.
8. Mr. Smith has one son and two daughters.

9. I do not like the answers to the questions.
10. This man is very large.

Exercise 2: Translate into Volapük

1. It is in the house.
2. You are a friend.
3. He is going with a friend.
4. A woman is going with the girl.
5. I gave my old books to my older sister.
6. We shall come tomorrow.
7. Where is the letter?
8. She said that she would come.
9. Let's begin work!
10. I love you.

Answer Key — Exercise 2

1. *Binos in dom.*
2. *Binol flen.*
3. *Golom ko flen.*
4. *Vom golof ko jipul.*
5. *Egivob bukis bäldik obik söre obik bäldikum.*
6. *Okömobs odelo.*
7. *Kiöpo binon-li pened?*
8. *Äsagof, das ökömof.*
9. *Leadobsös primön vobi!*
10. *Lelöfob oli.*

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Summary of Noun Declension

	Singular	**Plural**
Nominative	—	-s
Genitive	-a	-as
Dative	-e	-es
Accusative	-i	-is

Appendix B: Summary of Verb Tenses

Tense	Active Prefix	Passive Prefix
Present	(none)/a-	pa-
Past	ä-	pä-
Perfect	e-	pe-
Pluperfect	i-	pi-
Future	o-	po-
Future Perfect	u-	pu-

Appendix C: Summary of Pronoun Suffixes

	Singular	Plural
1st person	-ob	-obs
2nd person (fam.)	-ol	-ols
3rd masc.	-om	-oms
3rd fem.	-of	-ofs
3rd neut.	-on	-ons
Impersonal	-os	—
Generic	-oy	—

Appendix D: Selected Volapük Numbers

Number	Cardinal	Ordinal
1	bal	balid
2	tel	telid
3	kil	kilid
4	fol	folid
5	lul	lulid
6	mäl	mälid
7	vel	velid
8	jöl	jölid
9	zül	zülid
10	deg	degid
100	tum	tumid
1,000	mil	milid
1,000,000	balion	balionid

Appendix E: Further Resources

For those wishing to continue their study of Volapük, the following resources are recommended: the Volapük website at volapük.com, which contains dictionaries

(Volapük–English and English–Volapük) by Ralph Midgley, grammar lessons, and reading materials; the Wikibooks introduction to Volapük; the Volapük Wikipedia (*Vükiped*); the Volapük Facebook group (*Volapükalised*); and the classic grammars by Sprague, Linderfelt, and Post, many of which are available freely through the Internet Archive and Wikisource.

Volapük ä laidüp! — Volapük forever!

Menade bal, püki bal — One humanity, one language.

A Note on Sources and Methodology: This textbook draws on the Wikipedia article on Volapük, Omniglot's Volapük pages, the "Quick Look at Volapük" pamphlet, the Wikibooks Introduction to Volapük, Charles E. Sprague's *Hand-book of Volapük* (1888), Johanna Pink's scholarly article "The Volapük Qur'an: language, scripture, and nineteenth-century German universalist provincialism" (2024), and other publicly available grammars and dictionaries. The Biblical translations use both Schleyer's historical versions and renderings composed according to Volapük Nulik principles. The Qur'anic passages include Schleyer's attested 1890 translations alongside new renderings. The Vedic and Avestan passages are new compositions created for this textbook, as no historical Volapük translations of these scriptures are known to exist.